Mayor Christopher B. Coleman
390 City Hall
15 West Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55102

December 27, 2012

Dear Mayor Coleman,

Neighborhoods First! would like to thank you and the St. Paul Department of Public Works for the series of public meetings held at the Western District Police Station regarding the new Hamline Bridge over Ayd Mill Road and Canadian Pacific Railway. In particular, City Bridge Engineer Glenn Pagel has been informative and responsive to community inquiries.

Unfortunately, we are unable to support the final design of the new bridge. It is our view that four travel lanes are excessive for the current traffic volumes, approximately 16,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT), and that a three lane configuration would not only be adequate, but also safer. When Fairview and Lexington Avenues were converted from four to three lanes, the purported threshold for conversion was 18,000 ADT. Indeed the Federal Highway Administration manual suggests that three lane conversions should be considered up to 20,000 ADT. We also recommend the entire stretch of Hamline from Summit to University Avenue be restriped to three lanes with the captured right-of-way converted to bike lanes. This would benefit both bikers and pedestrians en-route to the Green Line, as bike lanes provide a buffer between traffic and pedestrians. This would make the sidewalks safer and more comfortable.

We also believe the width of the new bridge (68'-10") is excessive and thus too expensive. If it were constructed with three eleven foot vehicle lanes, two five foot bike lanes, and two eight foot sidewalks, it would accommodate all modes at a width slightly less than the existing 60'-6". Money would be saved on the span itself and the work needed on the existing abutments would be minimized.

While we are gratified to learn that placement of the piers will accommodate any Ayd Mill Road alternative, including the Linear Park, the explicit linkage of the bridge's functional design to the final disposition of Ayd Mill Road is troubling. Those in attendance at the December 12th meeting were told that if and when Ayd Mill is extended to I-94, the Hamline bridge could be reprogrammed with the sidewalks and bike lanes widened to ten feet and eight feet respectively. This is a further over-expenditure of taxpayer money and an attempt to link the Hamline Bridge to Ayd Mill Road, projects that should be separate and distinct.

Finally, we ask that Ayd Mill Road be restriped to a single lane in each direction, the speed limit reduced to 30mph, and bicycles safely reintroduced to coincide with construction of the Hamline Bridge. Such a configuration is consistent with the Preferred Alternative, the Two-Lane Extended to St. Anthony, and would bring a measure of relief to north end residents who have endured the hardship and hazard posed by the premature opening of the south ramps in 2002.

Sincerely,

Paul Busch (Chair)
1523 Laurel

Mike Madden
1768 Iglehart

Cc: St. Paul City Council